# PROJECT TRIUMPH - THE FRONT END

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I'm a rider, more than a collector, I like to use my bikes and I like to use them more or less as they were intended, give and take a bit for the age of the machinery - and the rider! For this reason I wanted to build a 1960s ISDT replica Triumph that I could actually ride off road in some semblance of comfort.
After looking long and hard at the suspension – and keeping in mind the primitive performance of the suspension on my 1948 Triumph TR5 Trophy, I decided that better than stock suspension (within the bounds of aesthetic decency) would be a good idea. Noting that none other than USA Enduro champion Bill Baird grafted Ceriani forks onto his late 60s Triumphs, I decided fit a pair of early Honda XL350 forks, reminiscent in many ways to the Cerianis and probably of similar performance. This also gave the opportunity to ditch the massively heavy TLS Triumph front wheel and go for the quite appropriate-looking 7 inch XL350 front wheel, laced to a 21 inch steel rim with Michelin trials tyre. I felt no compunction doing so as the Triumph factory ISDT bikes did something similar using the earlier (and far lighter) Triumph TLS conical wheel with alloy backing plate. The XL wheel would also give me the chance to use a front wheel drive speedo, essential if I was ever to navigate my way around an adventure ride one day.

First job was to extend the Honda steering stem an inch to match the Triumph frame. This was accomplished by turning off the weld from the bottom of the yokes and pressing out the shaft. A stepped extension was turned and welded in the stem and the longer stem welded back in place. You don't get many lucky breaks mixing Japanese and British components, but somehow the XL steering stem fitted a set of Triumph taper roller bearings from British Spares (BMS) with just a skim needed off the stem. The stock Triumph steering stops were removed and a set of adjustable stops made so that both the stock and a light alloy tank could be fitted with the stops adjusted accordingly.

A lot of time was spent agonising over the front guard. A mocked up high front guard simply looked too modern, so I persisted in grafting on a low mounted alloy 21-inch guard from BMS. This did not prove to be easy but after much fiddling I made up a concoction of part T100 and part Yamaha DT trail bike rear stay. Best of luck if anyone wants to try it.

Trawling through the shed I did find an ideal headlight set up. In one box a 6-inch XL350 headlight and in another a set of British (I don't know what model) headlight brackets that just happened (second spot of luck) to fit perfectly on the forks. With a few coats of black paint it didn't look half bad.

To top off the forks I needed a speedo and an ignition switch. The only speedo that seemed to look the part was the original Smiths unit from the Triumph and here was lucky break three, the XL cable fitted the Triumph speedo- if it will read accurately I doubt, but enough to get a WOF I hope.

I decided to use the T100 speedo bracket as it was easily grafted to the XL top clamp, though I cut the bracket down to suit the single speedo. A simple extension was cut out and bolted to this bracket to mount a new ignition switch.

Setting off the triple clamps is a re-chromed set of XL350 bars, once again a find from the depths of the shed, proving that one should never, ever, throw any bike parts out. Finishing off the bars is a set of Honda pattern alloy levers. I used these because I favour the modern dogleg shape over the originals, with their awkward wide hand-span. The T100 choke lever and throttle, a new pattern British-style dip switch and new clutch and throttle cables from BMS and a Honda XL350 brake cable from Econo Honda in Te Aroha completed the front end.